

Complete History of the Nevada State Archives

The Nevada State Archives officially opened for business in October 4, 1965. However, in 1861, initial archives legislation designated that all Carson County and Utah-Nevada territorial records in possession of the Carson County Recorder were to be transferred to the Secretary of the Territory "to be safely preserved by him as public records of the Territory;" Orion Clemens, Secretary of the Territory, was the de facto Nevada's first State Archivist (Statutes of Nevada, 1861,285.) In 1861 there was a resolution passed directing Isaac Roop to gather the records of Carson County and the provisional government and transfer them to the Secretary of Territory, to preserve as "archives of the Territory." Carson County and Utah-Nevada territorial probate records in the custody of the Clerk of the Probate Court of Storey County were to be deposited in the office of the Secretary of the Territory, "and were retained by the Secretary aforesaid, and his successors in office, as other records and archives of this territory" (Statutes of Nevada, 1862, 91.)

After statehood, the Secretary of State's office continued to maintain the records and the Secretary of State became the de facto State Archivist and he was required to keep proceedings and papers of the two constitutional conventions, the manuscripts containing the enrolled Acts, and joint resolutions and journals of the Legislature of the State of Nevada, Territory of Nevada, Carson County, Utah-Nevada territorial records and other historical records; (Statutes of Nevada, 1865, 149.)

Note: State Constitution, Article 5, Section 20 prescribes that the Secretary of State shall keep a true record of the Official Acts of the Legislative and Executive Departments of the Government (1864.)

In 1937, the State Board of Control consisting of the Governor, Secretary of State, State Controller, State Treasurer and Surveyor General (former State Board of Capitol Commissioners), were given the responsibility of authorizing the destruction of "old and obsolete" state records, and maintaining a record of the final disposition of such materials under the authority of the Nevada Historical Society (organized in 1904, state agency in 1907) which could receive records having a historical value for preservation (Statutes of Nevada, 1937, 74.) The Nevada Historical Society was deemed the state repository for "obsolete and non-current" state and local government records and became de facto the State Archives along with the Secretary of State's office (Statutes of Nevada, 1943, 90.)

This changed in 1957 as the State Board of Examiners, consisting of the Governor, Attorney-General and Secretary of State, were given the responsibility of authorizing, the destruction of "old and obsolete" state records, and maintaining a record of the final disposition of such materials. It allowed the Nevada Historical Society to receive records having a historical value for preservation (Statutes of Nevada, 1957, 66.)

The Division of Archives was created in 1965 in the office of the Secretary of State and John Koontz, Secretary of State becomes the de jure State Archivist and Frederick C.

Gale was hired as the Assistant State Archivist with the archives located in capitol annex (Statutes of Nevada, 1965, 559.)

An attempt in 1967 to abolish the Division of Archives and establish the Nevada Historical Society as the sole repository of archival records failed. Various laws pertaining to state and local historical records were amended to clarify that the Division of Archives, not the Nevada Historical Society, was the official repository of noncurrent state government records (Statutes of Nevada, 1967, 1270).

In 1973, the Division of Archives name changed to the Division of State, County and Municipal Archives (Statutes of Nevada, 1973, 345.) In 1975 the Division of Archives moved from capitol annex to 1807 N. Carson Street and in 1977, the Division of Archives was given responsibility of adopting regulations providing for categories of old records and minimum retention procedures by local government records (NRS 239.125).

Another change came to the Division of Archives in 1979 when it transferred to the State Library, and the Division of Archives moved from 1807 N. Carson Street to the old State Printing Building (Statutes of Nevada, 1979, 178.)

1983 marked the year that the Records Management function, exclusive of the micrographics program, was transferred to Division of Archives and the name changed to the Division of Archives and Records. This changed again in 1985 as the name changed to the Nevada State Library and Archives (NSLA). The State Historical Records Advisory Board was created in statute in 1989 and it was the first such Board created by law in the nation.

Also, in 1989, the Division of Archives and Records moved from 101 S. Fall Street to a temporary location on Highway 50 East so work could begin on the new NSLA building at 100 N. Stewart St. Unfortunately, during the move, the oldest record in State Archives was stolen resulting in time-consuming police investigations, criminal trials in Carson City and Douglas County, ending with convictions and the recovery of the records. The Division of Archives and Records moved into new the new NSLA building and the Nevada State Library and Archives building opened to the public on January 3, 1992. NSLA became a division in the newly created Department of Museums, Library and Arts as part of general reorganization of state government agencies; the Division of Archives and Records lost its division status.

In the State Library and Archives became a division within the Department of Administration as yet another reorganization in state government occurred. In 2015, the Legislature changed the name to the Nevada State Library, Archives and Public Records (NSLAPR).